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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Letter dated 30 August 1995 from the Permanent Representative of Algeria to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the press release issued following the second meeting of the countries of the Sahelo-Saharan region, held at Algiers on 23 and 24 August 1995 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this press release circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under items 97 and 98 of the provisional agenda.

(Signed) Ramtane LAMAMRA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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ANNEX

Press release issued following the second meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the countries of the Sahelo-Saharan region, held at Algiers on 23 and 24 August 1995

1. At the invitation of the Government of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, the second meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the countries of the Sahelo-Saharan region was held at Algiers on 23 and 24 August 1995.

2. During their stay in Algiers, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs were received by His Excellency Mr. Liamine Zeroual, the Head of State, who reiterated Algeria's commitment to the consolidation of peace, security and stability in the Sahelo-Saharan region and to the promotion of neighbourly relations and cooperation among its constituent States.

3. The Ministers welcomed the holding of this meeting, which had led to a strengthening of the ties of friendship, brotherhood and good-neighbourliness and a deepening of the dialogue and concerted action among the countries of the region. They emphasized the importance of establishing and furthering relationships based on trust among fraternal and neighbouring States and of increasing economic cooperation among the countries and peoples of the Sahelo-Saharan area, an ancient cradle of civilizations and crossroads of many cultures.

4. The Ministers welcomed the positive reaction to their common unifying approach, as well as the intention expressed by other countries of the region to join in the move towards concerted action and dialogue already under way among that group of States, in accordance with the conclusions and recommendations adopted at the meeting held in Algiers on 22 and 23 November 1993 and at the meeting held in Bamako on 22 and 23 August 1994.

5. The Ministers reviewed the progress made since the first Algiers meeting. They made an overall assessment of the situation prevailing in the Sahelo-Saharan area and considered the problems and existing situations which constitute obstacles to peace, security and stability in the region and hamper the promotion of economic cooperation among the States of the region.

Particular consideration was given to:

(a) Trade and economic cooperation;

(b) The question of refugees and displaced persons;

(c) Issues related to the security situation in the region; and

(d) Implementation of a mechanism for following up decisions.

6. The Ministers met and held an in-depth exchange of views regarding the problems affecting the region and ways of dealing with them through collective

action. They reaffirmed their steadfast commitment to the principles which had always governed relations among their countries and peoples, and which were based upon their attachment to common values of civilization, good-neighbourliness, non-intervention in internal affairs, respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of individual States and the inviolability of the borders inherited from colonization.

7. They reiterated their firm belief that the maintenance of peace, security and stability in the region was essential for the promotion of development and the growth of trade among the countries of the region.

8. The Ministers took note with satisfaction of developments in northern Mali and welcomed the efforts by fraternal Malians to implement the National Pact of Bamako with a view to securing a lasting peace in northern Mali.

9. While welcoming the meeting held in Tombouctou on 16 and 17 July 1995 between the Government of Mali and northern Mali's development partners, the Ministers renewed their appeal to the entire international community to increase its material and financial support for the implementation of all the provisions of the National Pact and for the consolidation of the peace process under way in the country.

10. In that context, the Ministers welcomed the signing of the repatriation agreements aimed at facilitating the organized and voluntary return of Malians who had been displaced within their own country. They also welcomed the positive role played by the agencies of the United Nations system in bringing about the return and socio-economic reintegration of displaced persons, and called for increased international assistance to that population.

11. Regarding the recent situation in the northern Niger, the Ministers welcomed the signing on 24 April 1995 of the agreement establishing a permanent peace between the Government of the Republic of the Niger and the Organisation de la résistance armée. They noted with great satisfaction the determination of all people of the Niger to achieve the objectives set out in that agreement and encouraged them to continue cooperating with the members of the Comité spécial de paix in order to consolidate the peace process which had already begun.

12. The Ministers noted that a donor round table was to be held on 15 October 1995 in Niamey to consider programmes for the revitalization of economic and social development in pastoral areas of the Niger. They urged the international community to play an active part in that effort and to provide the necessary material and financial support so that the Niger could consolidate its national unity and territorial integrity while ensuring uniform development.

13. The Ministers hailed the efforts of the Government of Chad to seek peace and stability, in accordance with the relevant decisions of the Sovereign National Conference, and appealed to all countries to promote reconciliation among Chadians.

14. The Ministers expressed their deep concern regarding the embargo imposed on the Arab people of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, despite the positive steps that country had taken and the negative effects of the embargo on the region. They

also reaffirmed their support for the relevant resolutions of the Organization of African Unity, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, while stressing the need to lift the embargo, thereby allowing the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya to refocus its efforts on the development of the region.

15. The Ministers conducted an assessment of the overall security conditions in the region and reaffirmed the determination of their Governments to strengthen coordination and cooperation in order to confront the problems and challenges faced by their respective countries and to establish favourable conditions for the maintenance of regional security and stability.

To that end, the Ministers emphasized the need for concerted action in the region against the spread of extremism, which exploited the noble and sacred values of their peoples, and against arms proliferation and drug trafficking, and for swift implementation of the measures to combat those problems adopted at the meeting on regional security held at Bamako on 22 and 23 August 1994.

16. The Ministers noted with concern the difficult economic situation in their countries. They continued to suffer the effects of an unfavourable economic environment characterized by the ongoing deterioration in the terms of trade, their staggering external debt burden and currency devaluations imposed under structural adjustment programmes, and aggravated by the negative impact of the agreements resulting from multilateral trade negotiations.

17. In that connection, they expressed their determination to strengthen economic relations among their countries in order to open up new prospects for regional cooperation, thereby stimulating South-South cooperation. They renewed their commitment to work tirelessly to develop trade, in particular by promoting fairs and expositions and increasing the number of meetings on economic and cultural topics. They reaffirmed their resolve to complete the Trans-Sahara Highway and the Sahel railway, which were major communications routes, in order to promote increased inter-African trade.

18. The Ministers also welcomed the adoption of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, and agreed to harmonize their efforts, in cooperation with the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel and the Joint Anti-Locust and Anti-Aviarian Organization, to combat desertification and locust infestation, which have had a major effect on their countries' economies.

19. Accordingly, the Ministers decided to hold two expert meetings dealing with: issues relating to desertification and locust infestation; ways and means of strengthening trade, cooperation in health care and cultural exchanges and transport and communications; and problems relating to displaced persons and refugees.

The two meetings will be held respectively in Mauritania and the Niger prior to the summit of heads of State of Sahelo-Saharan countries.

20. The Ministers also took note of progress in the elaboration of a draft cooperation agreement between the Arab Maghreb Union and the Economic Community of West African States, and invited those organizations to complete the agreement in order to accelerate regional integration in accordance with the Abuja Treaty.

21. The Ministers reaffirmed their common determination to ensure that their relations were commensurate with the aspirations of their peoples and their fraternal bonds of solidarity. In this connection, they indicated their interest in intensifying efforts to coordinate and harmonize their positions in international forums and organizations.

22. In addition, the Ministers expressed their assurance that the establishment of many forms of close cooperation among the countries of the region was an act of faith which reflected their common destinies and interests as well as their resolve to design and build a common future.

23. In the course of their meeting, the Ministers agreed to intensify their consultations on the establishment of a mechanism for following up and effectively implementing decisions taken at meetings of the Sahelo-Saharan countries. They considered the requests for membership which some States had submitted in order to be able to participate in future meetings of Sahelo-Saharan countries.

To that end, Algeria was asked to submit a report on institutionalization and admission requirements to the next summit meeting, to be held before the end of March 1996. The Ministers took note of the request of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya to host that summit.

24. The Ministers expressed their sincere gratitude to the Government and people of Algeria for the warm welcome and fraternal hospitality extended to them and to the members of their delegations throughout their stay in Algiers.